

are a boon to the parents and a blessing to the children. Dr. Haire combines a lucid and engaging literary style with a wider experience of the practical aspects of contraception than any other medical man in England.

Dr. Eder writes upon the psychology of contraception. His article begins with the astounding remark that "The psychology and psychopathology of contraception began in 1894 with Freud's description of the anxiety neurosis."

The faith of the followers of Freud in their master is notoriously immense; but it is scarcely credible that a disciple, however devoted, could believe that before the time of Freud the practice of contraception could produce neither psychological nor pathological effects. Dr. Eder's presentation of this subject is illuminatingly simple. People are opponents of birth-control because they are inspired by "life instincts" which "would give us, if we pushed them to their theoretical limit, infinite children." They are birth controllers, on the other hand, because, for some reason unexplained, they are at the mercy of an opposite set of instincts, the "ego instincts" which inspire them to desire the death of their children. The life instincts are described as "the deep-seated psychological features that masquerade under the various kinds of objections raised to birth-control." Dr. Eder then proceeds: "Were this properly grasped, there would be no question of making birth-control a political issue." The economic, humanitarian, eugenic, and educational aspects of the matter would, so to speak, fade away. Dr. Eder's solution is likely to strike the reader as disappointing. "Education, in the widest sense of the term, is the weapon with which such opposition is to be fought." Once you are educated to grasp which instinct you are victimised by, the whole problem becomes easy. In fact, there ceases to be a problem at all.

The article by Dr. Hannah Stone in the first book is also valuable. Dr. Stone is medical officer to the clinical research department of the American Birth Control

League, and has at her disposal a large body of statistics which are now in course of analysis.

C. P. BLACKER.

Briffault, Robert. *The Mothers: A Study of the Origins of Sentiments and Institutions.* London, 1926. Allen and Unwin. Three vols. Pp. 781 + 789 + 841. Price 25/- each.

ADEQUATELY to review a work of this type is a very difficult task; it runs to over a million words, and the footnotes contain references to an abundance of anthropological works which one had supposed were known as a whole to Sir James Frazer alone among living men.

In their range they include such widely diverse authors as one who wrote on "Teasing and Bullying" in the Pedagogical Seminary in 1897, to Cæsar, who appears in the bibliography as "Cæsar, C. Julius." This modern system of nomenclature, alas, breaks down in those cases like Livy and Virgil, whom we call by their *nomina*, so that the Mantuan appears as Virgil Maro, and is surprisingly quoted in an edition of 1818. Has modern scholarship contributed nothing? This brings me to what seems to be the weakest part of this vast and learned work. The greatest debt which I owe to my teachers in ancient history is the drilling I continually received in the scientific methods of estimating the value of "sources." The estimation of the comparative trustworthiness of different writers on primitive peoples is a very difficult task. In some cases the author of the present work has produced a vast array of references to support a contention or to controvert what someone else has said. Often, no doubt, one would be prepared to agree with him, but sometimes a short discussion of the credibility of the witnesses would ease the mind of the thought that because a thing has been said many times it is therefore true.

Having said these things, one turns to the more agreeable task of estimating the

nature of the argument and its value. Briefly summarized, this argument begins with a biological background. The author maintains that the ultimate control in sexual matters rests with the female, the male being prepared at such times and seasons as he is sexually mature to play his part more or less indiscriminately. It is suggested that the foundation of most human institutions is the desire and necessity of the female to protect herself from the unwelcome attentions of the male, and at the same time to arrange that she shall receive them at times convenient to herself. On this basis the author believes that, by a gradual process of evolution, laws and tabus (ultimately founded on the necessary segregation of the women at certain times) grew up. Finally these feminine institutions sank under the weight of the top hamper of their own construction and left the control in the hands of the men, woman having become such a sacred thing that, with a confusion which was almost inevitable, she was dubbed accursed.

So brief a summary does not do justice to the argument, but it at least emphasizes its originality and shows how, if we are to accept it, we must revise many of our opinions on the origin of certain savage customs. The horror with which incest is regarded by so many peoples has often been explained as resulting from companionship and the resulting blunting of the sexual impulse. But if the impulse were blunted why should incest be regarded with awful horror? Why should *Œdipus* tear out his eyes in despair after committing the most awful crime to which a relentless fate could drive him? But if we explain the horror of incest as being based on a rule founded by women who in the dim past were compelled to protect themselves, the matter can be much more easily accepted. It may not be possible to explain all human institutions on the same grounds, and in some cases the author's argument does seem a little thin. On the other hand, not only has he collected in an accessible form an enormous number of facts, but he has shown how very important is the biological approach to many problems which in the past have been con-

sidered to be purely sociological or philosophical problems.

L. H. DUDLEY BUXTON.

Gun, W. T. J. *Studies in Hereditary Ability*. London, 1928. Allen and Unwin. Pp. 288. Price 10/6.

MUST a book about pedigrees be dull? Mr. Gun clearly thinks not, and he has proved his case by writing this very readable and entertaining book. It is a great mass of historical tales and details, strung together on a series of genealogies, which show that many more or less eminent or interesting personages have been more or less closely related by common ancestors, and so brings out the highly hereditary character of human ability.

It would, however, probably be a mistake to claim too much for Mr. Gun's demonstration of this truth. His evidence is persuasive rather than cogent, and a captious critic of eugenics would not surrender to it. Rather would he insist that Mr. Gun's pedigrees are highly selective, and do not tell the whole story, and urge that persistent prominence in 'leadership' may be due to inequality of opportunity, hereditary position and wealth, rather than to hereditary ability. It is also mathematically highly probable that in small intermarrying castes every one will after a time be descended from every one else, and will so be able to claim as his ancestor most of the distinguished persons (and also most of the duffers) who have been engendered in that stock. If Mr. Gun thereupon replied to such criticism with completer and more intensively-studied pedigrees, like Mr. Lidbetter's, as he doubtless could, it is to be feared that his genealogical studies would become dull—with the (superficial) dullness of truly scientific work.

It is better therefore to welcome Mr. Gun's *Studies* without exaggerating their logical cogency. They are highly suggestive of the hereditariness of ability, but will hardly convince a fanatical believer in the potency of the environment. Such a one can be most effectively dealt with by a counter-